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AUTHOR Oxford, Rebecca L.
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ABSTRACT

Issues in assisting state and local education agencies to implement the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System were discussed in the context of responses from a structured interview of staff members from the Title I Technical Assistance Center (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory) responsible for Regions VIII, IX, and X--encompassing 14 western states and four territories. The issues were: (1) structuring the technical assistance organization; (2) determining clients' needs; (3) making services known to clients; (4) developing and delivering technical assistance services; and (5) evaluating the services rendered. Although opinion varied, it was generally determined that regional assignments worked well but that some degree of cross-regional flexibility should exist. Topical specialization was generally opposed. Various methods were advocated for determining clients' needs, including periodic surveys. It was agreed that the state contact person is the key to publicizing available services and that methods of communications should include printed information, contact between clients, and oral presentations. Methods of delivering technical services were suggested: workshops; in-person and telephone consultations; and publications. Suggestions were made to include both formal and informal evaluation procedures to assess the services provided. (MH)

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Issues in Assisting State and Local Education Agencies in the Implementation of the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System

Rebecca L. Oxford

Title I Technical Assistance Centers for Regions VIII, IX, and X

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

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Running Head: Title I Technical Assistance

Portions of this paper were presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, California, April 1979.

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Abstract

This paper discusses several issues in assisting state and local education agencies in implementing the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System: (a) structuring the technical assistance organization, (b) determining clients' needs, (c) making technical assistance services known to clients, (d) developing and delivering technical assistance services, and (e) evaluating technical assistance services. The issues are discussed in the context of responses from a structured interview of staff members from the Title I Technical Assistance Centers for Regions VIII, IX, and X.

Issues in Assisting State and Local Education Agencies in the Implementation of the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System

We are here today to discuss issues in providing evaluation technical assistance services, and we bring a number of different perspectives to the discussion. My particular perspective is that of a staff member in the Title I Technical Assistance Centers for HEW Regions VIII, IX, and X. These three centers are housed at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) in Portland, Oregon. Regions VIII, IX, and X cover 14 western states and four U.S. territories: Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Guam, Northern Marianas, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and American Samoa.

Using interview data, I will present results of part of an internal process evaluation. My comments do not represent the official policy of the Technical Assistance Centers for Regions VIII, IX, and X, nor do they necessarily represent the views of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, the other Technical Assistance Centers or the U.S. Office of Education (USOE).

Background

Before I discuss the issues surrounding technical assistance in Title I, I would like to provide a little background about the

program, its history, and the purpose of the Title I Technical Assistance Centers. Much of this information comes from Millman, Paisley, Rogers, Sanders & Womer, 1979. Title I is the part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. Title I provides Federal aid to local education agencies (LEAs) that have high concentrations of economically disadvantaged children. It is a very large program, with a current budget of $2.8 billion, representing one-third the total budget for USOE and with a clientele of almost 5,000,000 children in the U.S.

As established in 1965, Title I required annual evaluation reporting by local districts to their respective state education agencies (SEAs), which then reported to USOE, which then reported to Congress. The problem was that no clear guidelines were provided as to how the evaluations were to be conducted, so the results were not comparable or aggregatable. Therefore, the reports made by districts, states and USOE could say little about the actual impact or effect of Title I. This state of affairs continued until 1974, when the Education Amendments (PL93-380) required USOE to provide states with evaluation models to be used by districts and states in evaluating Title I projects. The Education Amendments of 1974 also called for USOE to provide technical assistance to states and districts in implementing the models. USOE contracted with Research Management

Corporation to develop the models, which became the basis of the new Title I Evaluation and Reporting System (TIERS). In September 1976, USOE established ten Title I Technical Assistance Centers, which are under contract to USOE to provide free technical assistance services to states and, at the discretion of the states, to districts in the implementation of the new system. The purpose of the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System, bolstered by the ten Title I Technical Assistance Centers, appears to be twofold: (a) to provide aggregatable data which will address Title I impact and (b) to enhance the "capacity for and quality of Title I evaluations" (Millman et al., p. 4).

The three evaluation models currently in use in the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System are a norm-referenced model, a control group model and a regression model. Each model has the capability of being used with criterion-referenced as well as norm-referenced tests. Work is now being done on models for Title I early childhood programs, high-turnover programs, migrant programs, and other Title I programs that pose special technical problems in evaluation.

Unlike some of the other technical assistance organizations represented in today's panel, the Title I Technical Assistance Centers are charged with helping states and districts implement specific evaluation models (under the aegis of the Title I Evaluation and

Reporting System). The primary objective of the Technical Assistance Centers is to "provide such technical and other assistance as may be necessary to state education agencies to enable them to assist local education agencies in the development and application of a systematic evaluation of the programs in accordance with the models developed by the Commissioner" (Millman et al., pp. 96-97). Intended and unintended secondary objectives cited by Millman et al. (p. 97) include: "creating intrastate or interstate consortia of evaluators, increasing the skilled evaluation workforce, upgrading related evaluation programs, improving Federal-state-local concurrence on Title I issues, using Title I evaluation to advance the state of the art in educational evaluation methods."

The Title I Technical Assistance Centers across the country will have a total budget of $8 million to $10 million in 1980 (Millman et al., p. 108), as estimated by the Blue Ribbon Panel which recently reviewed the performance of the Technical Assistance Centers under a USOE contract. This makes it one of the nation's largest and most important technical assistance efforts. Therefore, it is helpful to take a look inside the Technical Assistance Centers and find answers to some major questions about their functioning.

Method

There are several main issues in providing technical assistance in Title I evaluation. I have listed these issues in the form of

questions under five categories: (a) structuring the technical assistance organization, (b) determining clients' needs, (c) making technical assistance services known to clients, (d) developing and delivering technical assistance services, and (e) evaluating technical assistance services. Most of these categories are also being discussed by the other panel members, although the specific questions used in each category may be different.

Wallace Stevens, a favorite poet of mine, wrote a poem called "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" (Stevens, 1972). In this poem he evoked thirteen unique and intriguing images of a simple creature, the blackbird. The Title I Technical Assistance Centers must also have many different images for various people. With the blackbird in mind, I decided not to rely only on my perceptions but to interview a number of staff members about the central issues in our technical assistance work. The structured interviews ranged from one to three hours, depending how far the respondents wished to pursue the issues. There were six respondents: the Director of the Title I Technical Assistance Centers for Regions VIII, IX, and X; the Assistant Directors of two of the three regions; and one other professional staff member from each of the three regions. This represents about one-third of the total professional staff for Regions VIII, IX, and X. This sample is not random, but it is purposive in

that it includes professional representation from all three regions and from "management" and "non-management" levels. I did not interview clients at state and local levels for this study. However, clients were interviewed in another related investigation concerning the state and local effects of our Title I technical assistance services (Hansen & Oxford, 1979). Results of that effects study were reported at an AERA session yesterday.

At this point I would like to turn to the main issues in Title I evaluation technical assistance. I will consider the categories one by one and will detail the varying responses to each question within each category. Wherever appropriate, I will bring in relevant comments from the draft report of the Performance Review of USOE's Title I Evaluation Technical Assistance Program (Millman et al., 1979), hereafter known as the Blue Ribbon Panel report.

Main Issues

1. Structuring the Technical Assistance Organization

There are at present 19 professional staff members in the Title I Technical Assistance Centers for Regions VIII, IX, and X. Together, the Director and Assistant Directors compose the Management Team, which oversees the activities of the Title I Technical Assistance Centers for the three regions. Some professional staff members are assigned to only one region, while others are equally assigned across

the three regions, and still others have a major assignment in one region with lesser amounts of time spent in the other regions. Part of the reason for the flexibility of staffing is that the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (unlike other Technical Assistance Center contractors) currently has contracts for Technical Assistance Centers for three regions, not just one, and all three regional Technical Assistance Centers are centrally housed. This staffing pattern differs from patterns used in other Title I Technical Assistance Centers, some of which have "state coordinators" and all staff members assigned to specific states.

Question 1-a. Currently most NWREL Title I Technical Assistance Center personnel are assigned to regions. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this system of assignment?

Advantages mentioned by the respondents included: (a) continuity for establishing and maintaining rapport and credibility with clients; (b) ease of management; (c) team unity, which creates a more personal level of involvement and identity; (d) greater ability to learn clients' needs; and (e) possibility of greater informality in staff-client contacts. The main disadvantages were: (a) possibility of boredom from traveling to the same places and working with the same people and problems regularly; (b) potential for "regionalism" in the sense of divisive competition ("our" region vs. "yours," "we do it

better than you do," etc.); and (c) insufficient cross-fertilization of ideas among regions.

Most respondents wanted to continue the system of regional assignment but maintain or increase the flexibility within that structure. One Assistant Director, however, wanted to emphasize states and deemphasize regions. For example, a person could be assigned 25% to a state in the region and 75% to states independent of region. According to that Assistant Director, this would capitalize on continuity but also maximize cross-fertilization of ideas. One of the non-management professionals felt that a person's assignment should be two or three primary states on a cross-regional basis.

Question 1-b. To what degree should regionally assigned personnel be asked to serve in a different region?

All the respondents agreed that there should be some degree of cross-regional staff assignment, although there was no consensus on what the degree should be. Some said that staff members should serve cross regionally to the extent that they are needed, based on their special skills and schedule demands across regions. One felt that there should be some trading off of assignments to so-called "glamour places" such as Alaska, Hawaii, and Colorado. Another objected to the idea that "regionalism is a disease to be cured" by intermittent and unpredictable cross-regional assignments, because this creates

uncertainty among staff. He also objected to a possible bull-pen approach in which staff members are seen as interchangeable. He recommended that staff members voluntarily serve across regions based on their own preferences.

Question 1-c. What do you think about the idea of assigning personnel to certain topical areas of specialization rather than to regions?

The respondents indicated that they generally opposed topical specialization for one main reason: most field situations demand that the technical assistance providers have information about a whole range of topics, not about one specific technical topic. As one person put it, "Most situations require a general practitioner, not a brain surgeon, especially at the workshop level." Topical specialization was also seen as impractical and inefficient, particularly in light of the fact that the professionals in the Technical Assistance Centers for Regions VIII, IX, and X are highly trained (almost all having doctorates) and have similar backgrounds. Specialization by topic would also make the staff devise an internal structure that would falsely rigidify clients' needs, according to one respondent.

However, several respondents mentioned the fact that topical specialization is successfully used in an informal way in

consultations. Only one area was seen as having a clear need for formal topical specialization: assistance related to installation and use of the Title I computer program.

One person mentioned that it might be useful to have functional rather than topical specialization (e.g., development unit, field staff unit, technical analysis unit), with regional assignment for field staff only.

Question 1-d. What changes, if any, would you like to see in the organizational structure of the NWREL Technical Assistance Centers to promote the best possible technical assistance delivery?

Some possible changes mentioned by the respondents included: (a) state assignments within regions; (b) use of state coordinators; (c) subcontracting within specific states with already established organizations; (d) field offices in other locations; (e) more delegation of responsibility by Assistant Directors to their subordinates; and (f) functional specialization with units for development, technical analysis, and field work and with regional assignments for field staff only. The Blue Ribbon Panel (Millman et al., p. 116) also mentioned the field office possibility.

One word of caution was given by an interview respondent in the current study. All thoughts of restructuring the Technical Assistance Centers for Regions VIII, IX, and X are moot until the USOE Request for Proposals for the new contract period is published.

Question 1-e. Is there an adequate amount of contact and idea exchange among the Technical Assistance Centers throughout the country?

All of the responding members of the Management Team stated that the amount of contact and exchange among the Technical Assistance Centers across the country ranged from adequate to excellent. In contrast, the non-management professionals stated that the amount of contact and exchange was adequate at the management level but could be improved at the non-management professional level.

The primary mechanism for contact among the Technical Assistance Centers throughout the U.S. is the quarterly Technical Assistance Directors' Meeting, which is attended by the Director and the Assistant Directors of the Technical Assistance Centers for Regions VIII, IX, and X and by the Directors of the other Technical Assistance Centers.

Other national modes of contact among Technical Assistance Centers include a clearinghouse for test information, a proposed clearinghouse on Rasch modeling, technical committees, personal contacts, friendships among Technical Assistance Center Directors, quarterly reports, and newsletters.

Several respondents felt that there is redundancy in materials development (particularly in audiovisuals) in the Technical Assistance Centers across the country and that this situation should be improved.

Question 1-f. What changes, if any, would you like to see in the relationship among the Technical Assistance Centers throughout the country?

Several constructive ideas were presented, including: (a) cooperation among Technical Assistance Centers on personnel procurement, perhaps a clearinghouse for personnel; (b) seminar or conference activities organized around topics of general interest to Technical Assistance Center professionals, possibly as a presession or postsession at AERA; (c) special workshops on such topics as sampling, data display, computers, and Rasch modeling; (d) "borrowing" staff members from Technical Assistance Centers across the country, if allowable under the organizational structure; (e) better sharing of materials developed by Technical Assistance Centers; (f) linkage with other types of Technical Assistance Centers, such as Special Education Centers, Lau Centers, and Bilingual Centers, with such linkage coordinated through USOE; and (g) general improvement in openness of communication among Technical Assistance Centers nationally.

A centralized scheme of coordination among the country's Technical Assistance Centers was recommended by the Blue Ribbon Panel (Millman et al., 1979) for several aspects of the technical assistance effort: inservice training (p. 120), work on technical issues, development of workshop materials, and other tasks involving communication among

Technical Assistance Centers (p. 127). The Panel suggested that USOE coordinate the collection, storage, retrieval, updating, and distribution of technical assistance products, such as test reviews and training materials (p. 129).

2. Determining Clients' Needs

Clients' needs are supposed to be the basis of planning for Title I technical assistance services. Therefore, it is important to analyze the methods by which clients' needs are ascertained and how effective those methods are. In this study the clients are seen as the actual participants in a workshop or consultation or the recipients of technical papers or other technical assistance materials. A client may or may not be the same as the state contact person, who works with Title I evaluation at the state level.

Question 2-a. What methods are used in your region (or in NWREL Technical Assistance Centers) to determine a client group's evaluation training needs?

One person pointed out that the client group's training needs are obviously predetermined by law: technical training in implementing the models in the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System. However, other respondents indicated that the specific needs are not determined by law and must be discovered through a variety of means. Two most frequently mentioned methods for determining needs included:

(a) discussions with the state contact person; and (b) personal transactions that occur directly with the client group before, during, and after the workshop.

Other methods of assessing needs included (a) the formal study of Technical Assistance Center effects via client interviews and mail surveys; (b) needs assessment questionnaires for individual states; (c) client-written documentation such as evaluation reports, which indicate what the client has been doing in evaluation and might imply training needs; (d) use of a new Title I Technical Assistance Centers Resource Notebook (NWREL Title I Technical Assistance Centers, 1979) as a basis for collaborative planning with clients; (e) end-of-workshop evaluation forms which ask for a listing of further training needs; and (f) pre-workshop phone surveys of the entire group of participants, if the group is sufficiently small.

Question 2-b. What do you do if the training needs expressed by the contact person are different from the training needs you perceive the client group to have?

All the respondents indicated that this situation had arisen at least once during their technical assistance experience, and some said that it happened often in certain states. In general, respondents stated that they try to avoid confrontations with the state contact person, although occasionally confrontations are necessary.

Questioning techniques are often used for clarification, according to respondents. One respondent suggested negotiation with the contact person, followed by an attempt to "convince" the contact person if negotiation fails and if there remains a very serious, important discrepancy between our perception and the contact person's perception. However, that respondent stated that ultimately the contact person "is in the driver's seat," and we must operate on the assumption that the contact person is the most knowledgeable source concerning needs.

According to another respondent, workshops in his/her region are set up in such a way that there is sufficient opportunity for interaction to cause the needs of the client group to surface. When there is a discrepancy between our perceptions and the contact person's statement of the client group's needs, the workshop leaders respond on the spot and switch plans to meet the needs of the group. This respondent cautioned that it is best to inform the contact person in advance that this procedure will be used. This procedure requires that workshop leaders be "overprepared," i.e., take extra materials which may or may not be used.

One person mentioned some causes for differences in perception of needs, such as (a) communication breakdowns between district and state people or between teachers and administrators and (b) insufficient

advance public relations work on the part of the Technical Assistance Centers so that the client group and the contact person could know the full range of training options.

Question 2-c. What methods are used in your region (or in NWREL Technical Assistance Centers) to help the client group or the contact person become aware of training needs?

Informal conversations are the main mode by which awareness of training needs is fostered by the Technical Assistance Centers. Respondents mentioned reflective feedback and questioning techniques ("Do I hear you say...?") and summarization by staff members of the Technical Assistance Centers at different points in the conversation.

More formal methods include: (a) Technical Assistance Centers brochures describing services, (b) the new Title I Technical Assistance Centers Resource Notebook, and (c) information given to the state contact people at Regional Coordinating Council meetings and at annual meetings of state contacts from all three regions.

Question 2-d. What changes, if any, would you like to see in the methods for determining clients' needs?

Two respondents said no changes are needed. However, two others suggested using a formal needs assessment method on a recurrent basis, not to supplant but to augment existing approaches. Examples of formal mechanisms include (a) an annual survey or needs assessment

study at both state and local levels and (b) using the new Title I Technical Assistance Centers Resource Notebook to stimulate more formal responses about needs. Suggested extensions of the current, predominantly informal methods included (a) more interaction by telephone after the initial request for services; (b) direct communication with the local client group, especially teachers, not just the contact person; and (c) earlier communication among the workshop presenters before the workshop regarding materials, agenda, personalities, and situational factors.

3. Making Technical Assistance Services Known to Clients

As evidenced by previous comments, one function related to determining clients' needs is making technical assistance services known to clients. Respondents were asked several questions about methods used for letting clients know the range of available services.

Question 3-a. What methods are used in your region (or in NWREL Technical Assistance Centers) to make technical assistance services known to clients?

Both formal and informal methods are used. Formal methods include (a) individual planning sessions with state contact people, who are the key element in disseminating information about our services; (b) annual group meetings with state contact people; (c) Regional Coordinating Council meetings involving state contact people and a few

at-large district representatives; (d) statements about services at the beginning of workshops; (e) Title I Technical Assistance Centers Resource Notebook; (f) brochures; (g) list of workshops; (h) newsletter; and (i) invited presentations at meetings such as Bureau of Indian Affairs Conferences or State Administrators' Conferences. Less formal methods are word-of-mouth communication among client groups, casual discussions between Assistant Directors and contact people, and comments during consultations.

Question 3-b. What is the state contact person's role in making technical assistance services known to local districts?

All respondents said that the state contact person's role varies from state to state. Some state contact people are more active, i.e., they screen all or most local requests for technical assistance, schedule all technical assistance events in their states, and in effect take total responsibility. Other state contact people allow local districts to contact the Technical Assistance Centers directly. Other state contact people pass along local requests to the Technical Assistance Centers without screening them.

One respondent speculated that these differences in the role of state contact people is a function of the traditional role of the individual State Department of Education (i.e., a strong leadership role vs. a service role). He also thought that for the most part the

western states with which we deal have a philosophy of non-interference and low-profile government. Several other respondents indicated that state politics affected the state contact person's role.

One respondent felt that the role taken by the state contact person correlates with state size, with state contact people from bigger or more populous states being more constrained by the political situation, less likely to let districts know about technical assistance services and more likely to filter or screen district requests.

There may sometimes be an advantage in having active state contact people who screen local requests, according to one respondent. "The more you're into the contract period, the more you want restrictions on local districts calling the Technical Assistance Centers" due to scheduling overloads.

In the opinion of one person, the political wisdom of the state contact person is more important than the degree of evaluation expertise. This respondent indicated that if the state contact person is ineffective, technical assistance services will not be used.

Question 3-c. What changes, if any, would you like to see in the method of making technical assistance services known to clients?

Two respondents recommended no change. They indicated that the present system is working well. One of these respondents stated that

there should be no uniform prescription as to how technical assistance services should be made known to clients in various states: "Let it seek its own level."

Another respondent said that although "the network is there already and no new mechanism is needed, we could be more conscientious in letting clients know about new services through the Newsgram [the newsletter of the Technical Assistance Centers for Regions VIII, IX, and X]."

Other suggestions included: (a) distribute our information more widely in districts down to the teacher level and (b) urge USOE to provide regional sessions about technical assistance services as part of a dissemination system, which would not coopt state authority but would overcome political barriers in larger states.

4. Technical Assistance Development and Delivery

In order for technical assistance to be effective, thought must be given to the most appropriate procedures for development and delivery. A number of questions were asked about aspects of the development and delivery system.

Question 4-a. What process do you recommend for development and review of technical assistance materials?

Opinions differed on this question, partially reflecting differences in "regional styles" and partly reflecting individual preferences.

One Management Team member liked the process which is now used but would like more input so that the Assistant Director or his/her designee is responsible for any development done in the region. The opposite opinion was represented by another Management Team member, who doesn't want the Assistant Director to exercise "final signoff" on newly developed materials. That respondent emphasized the merit of a collegial, not supervisorial, content review in which at least three or four regional team members review all new development.

Another Management Team member felt that no formal development and review process is necessary and that there should be latitude for various styles. However, he/she recommended some general development guidelines: (a) sufficient advance time so that secretaries can complete the typing; (b) some clear delineation of responsibility so that there is one person to whom support staff can come for answers; and (c) one to three people who have responsibility for content.

One respondent called for a riskier, more exploratory type of development before content review takes place.

Use of one region's formal workshop development timeline was recommended by a respondent. Another respondent felt that the current system is working well in her region, in which one person is assigned to do development, the Assistant Director always reviews it, and other colleagues are invited to review it. One respondent suggested

improvement within the NWREL Technical Assistance Centers for sharing development ideas across regions, written or orally.

Question 4-b. What technical assistance delivery methods are used in your region (or in NWREL Technical Assistance Centers), and can you rank order them by frequency of use?

The following types of delivery methods were mentioned: (a) large-group workshops, (b) small-group workshops, (c) "wet" workshops (i.e., no-presentation workshops in which participants work with their own data with help from staff members from Technical Assistance Centers), (d) in-person consultations, (e) telephone consultations, (f) in-house technical assistance of a problem-solving nature, (g) stand-alone papers, (h) mailouts, (i) conference presentations such as Bureau of Indian Affairs, and (j) informal "drop-ins" at Technical Assistance Centers office by clients in the vicinity.

All respondents said that workshops were the most common mode of service delivery. Almost all mentioned that large-group workshops were still the most frequent mode, although one respondent stated that there were now more small-group workshops than large-group workshops, which were predominant previously. One person felt that workshops have evolved from a heavy emphasis on presentations to an emphasis on interaction.

Generally speaking, in-person consultations were the next most frequent delivery method, followed in order by telephone consultations, stand-alone papers and miscellaneous other methods.

Question 4-c. What are the purposes of each delivery method, in your opinion?

One person commented that all methods have a single purpose: getting information to clients and hence increasing skill levels. Another stated that we don't rationally decide on the purposes of each method or select a specific method based on purposes, but that we deal with blocks of time while keeping in mind strengths and weaknesses of each method.

However, other respondents were able to articulate specific purposes for the most commonly used delivery methods. Large-group workshops were seen as (a) creating general awareness of the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System and its requirements; (b) providing lots of information to a large number of people at one time; (c) helping set the scene for large-group decisions, such as evaluation model selection; and (d) disseminating common information. Small-group workshops provide specific training and are more useful than large-group workshops when much discussion is indicated.

In-person consultations offer a problem-solving atmosphere and personal interaction on specific concerns. Telephone consultations

serve a variety of purposes: (a) scheduling future events, (b) following up a workshop or an in-person consultation, (c) providing information for solving specific problems, and (d) answering specific questions.

Stand-alone papers were viewed as (a) providing "how-to-do-it" information (e.g., paper on out-of-level testing); (b) giving reinforcement, reference, or backup after the same material has been presented in a workshop or consultation; and (c) presenting technical information by which the professional research and evaluation community can analyze a specific problem, such as regression to the mean in the norm-referenced model and fuzzy cutoffs in the regression model.

Question 4-d. What factors are considered in selecting an appropriate technical assistance delivery method for a given client?

These factors were mentioned in the choice of a delivery method: (a) intended outcome of the technical assistance effort (e.g., awareness vs. definable skill vs. problem solution), (b) size of group, (c) state contact person's perception of what is appropriate within the state or the particular group, (d) the nature and technicality of the problem to be addressed, (e) degree of generalizability of the need, (f) expertise of the clients, (g) time available for development and delivery, and (h) cost.

The cost factor may become much more important in determining which delivery method to use, stated one respondent. This may entail new service delivery methods, more stand-alone materials, greater use of telephone consultations, workshops pairing one of our staff members with State Department of Education personnel, and generally less staff-intensive activities, according to that respondent. That person also felt that dissemination of stand-alone or programmed instructional materials should be supplemented by reinforcement, followup, and human interaction.

Question 4-e. How does research on technical issues relate to technical assistance delivery in the field?

A statement of philosophy was given by one Management Team respondent: "The ideal is that technical research should improve our ability to deliver services by providing answers to questions which have been raised by clientele groups or individuals and which have direct implications for clientele in implementing the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System. If Technical Assistance Center research began to lead clients' perceptions of their needs, we would have to examine this to see if it resulted in a real benefit to the client. We should be more responsive and reactive than proactive in research."

All respondents stated that research should be field-stimulated or field-based. As one respondent said, "If it doesn't relate to the

field, a research project isn't allowed in our region. Research may be enlarged in-house, but the initial stimulus is from the field."

Others stated that research (a) gives staff the background to answer questions and explain unusual results, especially those involving comparison of evaluation models; (b) influences workshop materials and presentations; (c) supplies good reasons for modifying or directly following the USOE models; (d) keeps us thinking and hence provides motivation; (e) adds to the credibility of the Technical Assistance Centers; and (f) puts us on the side of the client.

The Blue Ribbon Panel recommended that "research be recognized as a permissible activity for TACs to undertake and that a certain proportion of TAC funding be earmarked for research activities" (Millman et al., p. 121). However, the Blue Ribbon Panel also emphasized that "TACs must remain primarily service organizations and only secondarily research and development units" (p. 122).

Question 4-f. The Technical Assistance Centers are currently prohibited by contract from performing certain technical assistance activities, such as analyzing data or writing evaluation reports for clients. What changes, if any, would you like to see in terms of the kinds of technical assistance activites allowable for Technical Assistance Centers to perform?

Several respondents stated that USOE's list of restrictions is quite reasonable, and that any problems concerning these restrictions

are based on personal perceptions or interpretations. "For example, the Technical Assistance Centers are prohibited from analyzing state or local data for the purpose of producing the state or local Title I evaluation report, but this prohibition doesn't say we cannot analyze state or local data to answer a technical question," according to one respondent. That person wanted a recognition of the freedom and latitude that already exists within the restrictions. This view was also mentioned by most other respondents.

The restrictions list protects us, in the opinion of most respondents. One said he didn't want us to be allowed to do evaluations. Another opposed collecting data and writing reports for clients because of the number of small districts and because our participation in such activities might take business away from other parts of the parent organization, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Others applauded the restriction on report writing and recommending specific tests. One person said that the restrictions should stay the way they are, otherwise the Technical Assistance Centers will lose their identity as a "third party."

However, one respondent felt that we should be allowed to analyze data for local and state reports, help clients interpret their data for various audiences, help them understand their printouts, and track down errors. Another stated that we should be empowered to do data

quality checks, which are clearly a form of evaluation for clients. One person also stated that we should be allowed to do evaluations that supplement the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System.

Another person speculated that we might go into some basic analysis of local clients' data if USOE moves to centralized data analysis due to the new sampling and reporting requirements. However, this person felt that such data analysis would more likely be centralized by USOE in State Departments of Education or elsewhere rather in Technical Assistance Centers.

Freer interpretation of current restrictions should be applied in a manner that would allow us to reach a broader clientele, including non-Title I personnel, stated one respondent.

The Blue Ribbon Panel also commented on activities permissible to Technical Assistance Centers. "Permissible areas of service should be expanded to include: (1) technical assistance directed toward identifying strengths and weaknesses of individual programs for the purpose of improving them, and (2) services that require a more specialized knowledge and expertise, but a relatively low-level effort (e.g., data analysis, quality control of data)" (Millman et al., p. 118). However, the Blue Ribbon Panel did not recommend expanding the reporting requirements of districts or states to include process or formative evaluation data (p. 119).

5. Evaluating Technical Assistance Services

Technical assistance services are evaluated in many ways, formally and informally, consciously and unconsciously. Respondents gave their opinions about how this evaluation is and should be done.

Question 5-a. What formal or informal methods are used in your region (or in the NWREL Technical Assistance Centers) to determine effectiveness of technical assistance services?

Some formal methods mentioned for evaluating effectivess of technical assistance services included: (a) workshop evaluation forms and (b) study of Technical Assistance Center effects via client surveys and interviews. Less formal methods included: (a) casual discussions with clients; (b) observations and debriefing among staff, sometimes with contact person present; (c) examining district evaluation reports to see what clients learned from workshop; and (d) listening to the language used by workshop participants. Several respondents stated that their best evaluative information came informally.

One person said that "effectiveness of services" is not evaluated, but "satisfaction with services" is evaluated at the end of each large-group event.

Question 5-b. Based on your formal and informal observations, which technical assistance topics and/or delivery methods have been the most effective?

The effectiveness of topics and methods depends on the purpose of the activity, said several respondents. However, most respondents were able to isolate some specific topics and methods which appeared to be highly effective.

Topics which were mentioned included (a) testing in general; (b) how evaluation can be used for decision making, not just for accountability; (c) orientation to the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System; (d) test selection; and (e) out-of-level testing.

Methods which were seen as most successful included: (a) realistic simulations; (b) work sessions using clients' own data; (c) activities involving a great deal of group interaction; and (d) activites which result in a permanent product that the client can take away afterward.

Question 5-c. What changes, if any, would you like to see in the methods for determining effectiveness of technical assistance services?

One person desired a structured, recurrent evaluation of technical assistance activites, such as an annual survey. That respondent wanted to see among staff a greater recognition of the worth of formally evaluating our own services and a greater attempt to use this information ("practice what we preach"). Another person cautioned that if such a formal, recurrent evaluation of our effects takes place, we should be careful to (a) plan for nondisruption,

(b) accurately estimate the scope of work, and (c) have adequate communication with staff about the procedures of the evaluation.

"We get pretty accurate feedback and don't need changes in our evaluation system," said one respondent. However, a different respondent bemoaned the fact that it is impossible to obtain unbiased information from clients on workshop evaluation forms or on a formal, large-scale recurrent survey (as long as it is an activity of the Technical Assistance Centers). Another respondent recommended use of a third-party evaluation purchased with our own money to examine Technical Assistance Centers' effectiveness. This is different from the USOE-sponsored Blue Ribbon Panel's performance review of Technical Assistance Centers (Millman et al., 1979).

One source of evaluative information might be checking to see whether clients begin to seek out other agencies for direct evaluation services, even if they have to pay. This may be a positive sign of increased interest or need for evaluation, according to one respondent.

Summary and Conclusions

This paper has analyzed technical assistance issues in Title I Technical Assistance Centers in Regions VIII, IX, and X. Five main issues have been discussed: (a) structure, (b) needs assessment, (c) dissemination of information about services, (d) development and delivery, and (e) evaluation of services.

In terms of organizational structure, the staff members who were interviewed felt that the system of regional assignments was working well but that some degree of cross-regional flexibility should be maintained. Topical specialization was generally opposed, but functional specialization had some advocates. The question of field offices and state assignments remains unresolved. Management felt that nationwide communication among Technical Assistance Centers is adequate, but non-management professionals felt the need for greater communication among the country's Technical Assistance Centers.

Assessment of clients' needs is done in a variety of formal and informal ways, such as discussion with the state contact person, personal transactions with audiences, surveys, workshop evaluation forms, and the new Title I Technical Assistance Centers Resource Notebook. A periodic survey was recommended by some respondents for determining needs, but other respondents were quite satisfied with the current methods.

The state contact person is the key to making technical assistance services known to clients, according to the respondents. That person's role varies from state to state, largely depending on state political factors. Ways to make services known included printed information about technical assistance services, word-of-mouth communication among clients, and oral presentations. Some possible

changes in the method of making services known included wider distribution of information in districts down to the teacher level, USOE coordination of dissemination sessions, and better use of newsletters.

Opinions differed about the best way to develop materials, with the central question being the amount of control that should be exercised over content. The main method of delivering technical assistance services is the workshop, followed by in-person consultations, telephone consultations, stand-alone papers, and miscellaneous other methods. Many factors affect choice of delivery methods: intended outcome of the effort (awareness vs. skill vs. problem-solving), group size, group type, locality, nature and technicality of the problem, generalizability of the need, expertise of client, time, and cost. The cost factor is increasing in importance and may affect delivery methods in the future. Field-based research related to the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System was encouraged. There were differences in viewpoint on whether some of the current USOE restrictions on certain technical assistance activities should be eased or more freely interpreted.

Evaluation of technical assistance services is done both formally (via workshop evaluation forms, surveys, and interviews) and informally or unobtrusively (via discussions, debriefing,

observations, and examination of documents). Both types of evaluative information seem necessary. Based on evaluative information, the most effective delivery strategies involve realistic simulations, work with clients' own data, interaction among clients, and activities resulting in a product.

These data are based on a qualitative process evaluation involving interviews with a sample of providers of Title I technical assistance in Regions VIII, IX, and X. The conclusions are not final. The next logical step in the process evaluation is an analysis of documents, records and anecdotal field notes or contact logs (Freeman, 1977, p. 32). After that, these process data and information from the previously mentioned effects study (Hansen & Oxford, 1979) need to be drawn together to create a total picture of the Title I Technical Assistance Centers in Regions VIII, IX, and X.

Ultimately, the adequacy of the process and the impact of the Title I Technical Assistance Centers should be viewed in light of a change model. Guba and Clark (undated) proposed a model of change beginning with research, which leads to two stages of development (invention and design), followed by two stages of diffusion (dissemination and demonstration), which leads finally to three stages of adoption (trial, installation, and institutionalization). The Title I Evaluation and Reporting System is in the adoption phase in

most states and the diffusion phase in a few states. Unless the charge to the Technical Assistance Centers is changed by USOE, the success of the Technical Assistance Centers should be judged in terms of how well these centers conduct diffusion efforts and aid states and districts adopt the system. The process data reported here are a small piece of information that could contribute to making this judgment.

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